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Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General condemns attacks on Israeli buses in Gaza Strip; commends Government of Israel and PLO for continuing negotiations.

+ Secretary-General has meetings with Prime Minister of Pakistan and Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq.

+ Angolan parties must take resolute steps to implement Lusaka Protocol, or UNAVEM III deployment could be postponed or stopped, Secretary-General says.

+ Special Envoy for Tajikistan escapes injury after attack on convoy taking him to northern Afghanistan.

+ Commission on Status of Women approves draft action platform for Fourth World Conference on Women.

+ Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information appoints Thérèse Gastaut as spokeswoman for World Conference on Women.

+ Secretary-General extends term of Representative in Cambodia for six months, at request of Cambodian Government.

+ Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks continues negotiations on draft agreement on conservation and sustainable development of high-seas fisheries.

+ Commission for Social Development begins thirty-fourth session at Headquarters.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has expressed deep shock at the two attacks on Israeli buses in the Gaza Strip yesterday, in which several people were killed and dozens were wounded. He strongly condemned those acts, as well as other acts of violence, which could only serve to undermine the confidence needed to sustain the peace process.

For information media—not an official record

The Secretary-General commended the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) for continuing their negotiations today, in an effort to implement fully the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements.

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On Saturday, the Secretary-General hosted a working lunch for Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan at his residence. They reviewed political problems in which the United Nations was involved, in particular in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and discussed United Nations efforts in international cooperation and development. Mrs. Bhutto expressed her Government's full support for the Organization's positive contribution in the region.

At Headquarters on Friday, the Secretary-General had a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, Tariq Aziz, at Mr. Aziz's request. They discussed the latest developments regarding Iraqi compliance with Security Council resolutions, in view of the forthcoming report by the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission on the disarmament of Iraq, Rolf Ekeus.

Mr. Aziz also informed the Secretary-General of Iraq's position in relation to the draft resolution currently being considered by the Security Council. The Secretary-General reiterated his support for the "oil-for-food" formula, as a first step towards the alleviation of the suffering of the Iraqi people. He also stressed the importance of Iraq's cooperation with the United Nations.

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United Nations efforts to assist the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol must be matched by political will and concrete action on the part of the Angolan parties, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a report dated 7 April, he said the pace of implementation had recently increased, but resolute steps were needed to ensure that the peace process could be pursued with confidence. He expressed concern about the fragility of the cease-fire, reports of military preparations and major troop movements, and indications of the continued acquisition of weapons from abroad. In addition, attacks on unarmed United Nations observers raised doubts about the willingness of the parties to cooperate in good faith.

The Secretary-General noted that arrangements for the dispatch of troop battalions of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III) were underway. However, it would be impossible to deploy troops in May if the Angolan Government and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) did not comply with the Lusaka Protocol and provide indispensable logistical support. He warned that he would recommend that the deployment of troops be postponed or stopped if the parties did not meet their commitments, including the effective cessation of hostilities, the disengagement of forces and the setting up of verification mechanisms.

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The Secretary-General also warned against undue expectations that the arrival of United Nations troops would in itself solve the pressing problems that the Angolans must resolve themselves. He recalled that UNAVEM III had a mandate to monitor and verify implementation of the Lusaka Protocol. The troops could play a useful role in fostering a climate of mutual trust and confidence, but could not perform the tasks that belonged to the parties themselves. He reiterated that all necessary conditions for the Mission's deployment must be fulfilled in a timely manner, or the schedule would be affected and the peace process hindered. The parties would have to bear full responsibility for the resulting delays.

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A convoy transporting Special Envoy Ramiro Piriz-Ballon from Tajikistan to Afghanistan was attacked today while crossing a river between the two countries, according to a United Nations spokesman. One escort truck was blown up. The Special Envoy was not injured, but it was "a close call". He proceeded into northern Afghanistan after the attack for talks with opposition leaders.

The Secretary-General recently asked Mr. Piriz-Ballon to visit Moscow, Dushanbe, Tashkent and northern Afghanistan to determine the time, venue and agenda for the fourth round of inter-Tajik talks. As agreed during previous consultations, the issue of national reconciliation through the establishment of a broad-based national government and the renunciation of the use of force will constitute the core of the agenda of the upcoming talks.

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A draft platform for action to empower women for the benefit of all was approved on Friday night by the Commission on the Status of Women. It will be submitted to the Fourth World Conference on Women, which will be held in Beijing from 4ÑtoÑ15ÑSeptember. The Commission extended its session, which began on 15 March, by three days in order to finalize the draft.

The draft platform contains recommendations relating to the impact on women of: poverty; education; health; violence; armed conflict; economic structures; power sharing and decision-making; mechanisms to promote the advancement of women; human rights; the media; the environment; and the situation of girls. It contains a great deal of bracketed language, indicating text that has yet to be agreed on.

Certain references are consistently placed in brackets, including those relating to sexual health and reproductive rights. Other disputed references include qualifying human rights as "universal"; the term "equity" as opposed to, or in conjunction with, "equality"; references to religious ethical values, cultural background and philosophical convictions; and references to sexual orientation.

In a closing statement, Gertrude Mongella, Secretary-General of the Fourth Conference on Women, said the draft platform made it clear that one

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issue -- the issue of equality between women and men -- was an accepted principle which was non-negotiable. A complete revolution was needed to transfer a fair share of resources into the hands of women.

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The Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information, Samir Sanbar, has appointed Thérèse Gastaut as spokeswoman for the Fourth World Conference on Women. Since 15 December 1992, Mrs. Gastaut has been Director of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva and spokeswoman for the Secretary-General, based in Geneva.

Mrs. Gastaut was the spokeswoman and head of the information team of the Third World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi in 1985, and the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993.

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The Secretary-General has extended the term of his Representative in Cambodia, Benny Widyono, for another six months. In a letter to the Security Council, he said he had taken that action in response to a request by the Cambodian Government.

Mr. Widyono has represented the Secretary-General in Cambodia for the past year, during which he has been assisted by three military advisers in carrying out his mandate in accordance with the Paris Agreements. He will be assisted by one military adviser in the next six months.

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The Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks has been continuing negotiations on a revised draft agreement on the conservation and sustainable development of high-seas fisheries. The original 48-article draft agreement lays out general principles to guide coastal and distant-water-fishing States in fulfilling their conservation and management duties under the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. Those duties include measures to eliminate overfishing and ensure long-term sustainability of stocks.

Chairman Satya Nandan (Fiji) told the Conference on Friday that there had been broad agreement on article 20, which deals with regional agreements and arrangements for compliance and enforcement. However, some States had expressed concern on the principle governing boarding and inspection of fishing vessels on the high seas. The development of rules and procedures, as well as a safeguards principle, was also being discussed.

Mr. Nandan said that negotiations were focusing on the issue of inspection and communication between the flag State and the port State and follow-up action. Although the Conference was a long way from reaching

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complete agreement on every issue, and there were some reservations on the approach being taken, he was encouraged by the progress that had been made so far.

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The Commission for Social Development today began its thirty-fourth session, meeting at Headquarters for the first time since 1979. Earlier sessions were held every two years in Vienna. Over the next ten days, the Commission will focus on follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development.

The Commission will consider how best to coordinate its work in light of the Summit's outcome and the results of other recent United Nations conferences which addressed social and economic development issues. The Social Summit adopted an action plan addressing the causes of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, and calling for coordinated action by the international community and the United Nations system.

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